Report of Outbreak of Fire in the All-India Industrial and Fine Arts Exhibition, Cubbon Park, Bangalore—Constitution of a Committee of Enquiry.

READ—

Government Order No. H.A. 1373-85—Pol. 59-51-3, dated the 12th May 1951, constituting a Committee of Enquiry to examine and report on the outbreak of fire in the All-India Industrial and Fine Arts Exhibition, Cubbon Park, Bangalore, on the 29th April 1951.

2. Letter No. E.C. 28—51-52, dated 31st August 1951, from the Chairman of the Committee forwarding the Report of Enquiry.

ORDER NO. H.A. 11437-518—POL. 59-51-20, DATED BANGALORE, THE 18TH MARCH 1952.

There was an outbreak of fire in the All-India Industrial and Fine Arts Exhibition situated in the premises of the Cubbon Park, Bangalore, on the afternoon of the 29th April 1951. This exhibition, which had been organised in aid of the Hon'ble Chief Minister's Assam Relief Fund, was opened by the President of India on the 11th April 1951. In the exhibition grounds, there were nearly 600 stalls constructed with bamboo matting and roofed with cocoanut palms. The materials used were thus of a highly inflammable nature.

As soon as the fire broke out, Fire Brigade Units stationed in the exhibition premises went into operation, and these were reinforced by additional units. They did their best to put out the fire and to save as much property as possible. But the spread of fire was so rapid that the entire structure was consumed by the flames and reduced to ashes within about 20 minutes.

The necessity of holding such exhibitions, in view of their educational and cultural values, having proved itself beyond doubt, it was considered desirable to enquire into this occurrence with a view to ascertain the ways and means of ensuring the non-recurrence of such mishaps in future. The public were also deeply interested to know the precautions prescribed in the rules against the risk of fire, the extent to which these precautions were observed in the present case, and how disastrous would the consequences be if these rules are overlooked or ignored. So, a Committee of Enquiry was constituted under the Chairmanship of Sri T. Singaravelu Mudaliar, B.A., B.L., retired Judge, High Court of Mysore, to examine and report on the causes for the outbreak and the rapid spread of the fire, the extent of damage caused by it, the precautionary measures that had been taken, and also to recommend the manner of conducting such exhibitions in future.

The Committee began its deliberations on the 25th May 1951, and examined 39 witnesses. The scene of the fire in Cubbon Park was inspected on 17th June 1951. In order to facilitate the enquiry, the Inspector-General of Police made available to the Committee the results of departmental investigation as to the cause of the fire, extent of damage, etc. The report of Mr. Newsam regarding the fire in the All-India Khadi and Swadeshi Exhibition, Madras, on 22nd December 1939, was also made available to the Committee for reference. In addition, the Committee collected information from the literature on the *Festival of Britain*, *British Fair of Industries*, *etc.*, which was supplied by the Trade Agent for Mysore in London.

The report of enquiry was furnished to Government on the 31st August 1951. The report is being printed and will be made available to the Press. The findings and recommendations of the Committee may be summarised as follows:—

Causes for the Outbreak of Fire.—No definite evidence was forthcoming as to the exact cause of the fire. In the absence of any positive proof or reliable clue, the Committee heard various suggestions put forward by the witnesses as to the cause of the fire and finally came to the following conclusion, *viz.*:—

> "Having discussed the various suggestions made before us, we are of the opinion that the fire was not due to sabotage, but must have been due to accident. The accident might have been either by short-circuiting of electric current or by the sudden catching of fire of the roof of one of the empty stalls. We have already mentioned the grounds of short-circuiting of electric current not being probable. The other cause therefore appears to be probable. We may observe, however, finally, that it is only as a mere probability that we suggest this cause, since we have not before us definite evidence either of any eye witness or otherwise to say definitely that this was the actual cause."

Extent of Damage.—According to the statement of Sri B. R. Srinivasa Murthy, Manager of the Exhibition Office, about 494 stalls were allotted to 345 persons. The Committee ascertained from the Secretary of the Stall-holders and Exhibitors Association, that some 182 stall-holders had sent statements to the Association showing the value of articles exhibited, loss sustained by them, etc. The Police also had placed their report of enquiry before the Committee. It is reported that the Military Department did not intimate the extent of loss, if any, sustained by them. The witnesses who were examined by the Committee seem to have given various versions about the extent of damage caused by the fire. Allowing some margin for exaggeration, the Committee estimated the loss to be roughly at about six or seven lakhs of rupees excluding the value of materials used by the contractor for the construction of the enclosures and the stalls. Including this, the extent of damage suffered by stall-holders, exhibitors and others would be between seven and eight lakhs of rupees.

The Committee has observed in this connection that the exhibition should not have been held in a place like Cubbon Park which provides amenities to the public for recreation and relaxation. They observed that the green lawns and the beautiful shrubbery were destroyed by the fire, and it would take a long time and involve heavy expenditure to restore the park to its original condition. It is estimated that the restoration of the lawn will involve an expenditure of about Rs. 5,000.

Precautionary measures taken against such eventualities.—The Committee has observed that the management had provided one unit of Fire Brigade consisting of one tanker and one trailer pump, manned by one Subedar-Major, one Subedar, one Havildar and eight Police Constables, and that provision should have been made for adequate supply of water. It would appear that in spite of the Fire Officer pointing out to the management the necessity for improving water supply, they did not pay any attention to it. Some of the witnesses examined by the Committee have also said that, if there had been, at the spot, people trained in fire fighting, they could have isolated the stalls burning in early stages from the rest and prevented the huge devastation. The Committee has therefore expressed the opinion that some precautionary measures were taken against the fire, but they were not adequate enough to quench the fire that occurred.

Government concur with the above findings of the Committee.

They have considered the question of affording adequate protection against fire at public functions such as Exhibitions, Fairs, Carnivals, Conferences, etc., where large congregations meet and fire risks are involved. It is obviously impossible for the Police Fire Brigade to send Fire Fighting Units, free of all charges, whenever and wherever there are large congregations of people with temporary structures and risks of fire, particularly when requisitions are received from interior and out of the way places. In Government Order No. H.A. 5472-85—Pol. 739-50-3, dated 10th September 1951, suitable instructions have been issued to the Inspector-General of Police to arrange for stand-by duties and to collect hire charges from the organisers of the functions according to the rates specified in the Government Order.

The Committee has suggested that it is necessary that the holding of such exhibitions should be under the control of Government, and that an Act on the model of the places of Public Resort Act, 1888 (Madras Act II of 1888), be enacted in Mysore State with suitable modifications. Action is being taken to prepare a Bill on those lines and it will be placed before the Legislature.

The Committee has also made certain recommendations regarding the manner of organising and conducting such exhibitions in future, with reference to:

(i) the area to be allotted for such purposes in Bangalore City;
(ii) the design to be adopted and the material to be used in the construction of stalls and enclosures;
(iii) the precautionary measures to be prescribed for ensuring public safety; and
(iv) the possibility of insurance against the risk of fire.

The Committee has observed that there must be a permanent structure within an enclosure, built of bricks and mortar, for locating the Exhibition Offices with stalls all round, for exhibiting valuable articles such as fine arts, pictures, paintings, photographs, silk fabrics, jewellery, Government departmental exhibits, Military and I.A.F. stalls, electrical fittings, etc., and that a big stadium may be built

within the enclosure so as to allow Olympic Games and Sports Tournaments being conducted inside. The locality which is considered suitable by the Committee for holding exhibitions and other shows of public interest in Bangalore City is the one in Parade Ground, to the east of Queen's Park.

All these recommendations contained in the report require to be examined in detail, in consultation with the appropriate authorities. Orders regarding them will issue separately.

In conclusion, His Highness the Maharaja wishes to place on record his appreciation of the valuable services rendered by the Chairman and the Members who served on the Committee.

By Order of His Highness the Maharaja,

E. V. GANAPATI IYER,
Chief Secretary to Government.

FINANCIAL SECRETARIAT

Issues instructions regarding utilisation of Budget Grants for 1952-53. voted by Legislative Assembly.

OFFICIAL MEMORANDUM

ORDER No. FL. (B) 6792-872—BUD. 32-51-1, DATED BANGALORE, THE 31ST MARCH 1952.

The Legislative Assembly has in its March Session (1952) voted the grants contained in the enclosed statement. The amounts included in the statement are intended to cover the payments falling due during the first four months of the year 1952-53 and generally approximate to about one-third of the amounts required for the whole year as estimated for under each Major head in the copy of the Budget sent to all Heads of Departments separately. The Budget now prepared is only an interim Budget and is likely to be altered with the change in the policies of the new Government. As the grants for the whole year have to be voted only by the new Legislative Assembly, necessary demands covering the remaining eight months of the year will be placed before that House in due course. Till then, it is necessary for all Heads of Departments not to exceed the grants already obtained and included in the attached statement.

Heads of Departments are requested to issue suitable instructions to all subordinate officers.

M. SHAMANNA,
Secretary to Government,
Finance Department.

1	2		3		
Sl. No.	Services and Purposes		Sums not exceeding		Total
			Voted by the Legislative Assembly	Charged on the Consolidated Fund	
	A. EXPENDITURE MET FROM REVENUE.		Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1	7	Land Revenue	15,64,000	...	15,64,000
2	8	State Excise Duties	3,50,000	...	3,50,000
3	9	Stamps	1,40,000	...	1,40,000
4	10	Forest	13,61,000	...	13,61,000
5	11	Registration	1,61,000	...	1,61,000
6	12	Charges on account of Motor Vehicles Act ...	2,38,000	...	2,38,000
7	18	Other Taxes and Duties	1,54,000	...	1,54,000
8	18	Other Revenue Expenditure Financed from Ordinary Revenue.	13,80,000	...	13,80,000
9	19	Construction of Irrigation, Navigation, Embankment and Drainage Works.	6,71,000	...	6,71,000
		Carried over ...	60,14,000	...	60,14,000